

It's a New World

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Over the course of the past ten years or so the anarchist milieu has been rife with attack and counter-attack, both defamation of character and of sexual prowess. Not that this is anything new. Since well before Bakunin lambasted Marx for being an authoritarian Prussian, there has been a high level of infighting, back-biting and mud-slinging amongst radicals of all types. This isn't necessarily unhealthy, since sometimes nothing clears the air like a good split (to borrow a famous dictum of Bordiga's). What is surprising, however, is where some of this sound and fury is originating. One expects abuse from powerless, frustrated activists and armchair theorists who have nothing better to do. What is surprising to us right now is that even fairly respected, major theorists and activists have joined the fray with passion. Does this reflect something of the current state of frustration and confusion in the insurrectionary milieu?

A number of things have changed over the last three or four years that haven't been firmly placed in context. Anarchists, who once attempted to forge a third way between capitalism and communism, now find themselves in the unenviable position of being virtually the sole opposition to the global hegemony of capital. Puny in number, relatively bereft of resources, and almost hopelessly outmaneuvered by capital, are anarchists turning on each other to escape facing more crushing responsibilities?

The development of spectacular domination is an accomplished fact. The internet, technology careening out of control, and a working class that thinks its a middle class are symptomatic of just how far and fast capital has been able to extend its control over the human animal. Not only in the industrialized and postindustrial world, but also in developing countries the triumph of capital has been realized and reaffirmed. The anarchist milieu has been split between those who want to resist and those who want to embrace spectacular media and technological advances in production.

With this has also come the end of the traditional working class, at least as regards national boundaries. The fifty year old dream of having low paid workers in other countries assembling cars and radios and toys has been realized, leaving the US with a singularly service-oriented economy based on the rapid production and distribution of ultimately worthless information and cultural commodities. GATT and NAFTA, have facilitated the flight of blue collar jobs into Mexico, Guatemala, the Philippines, etc. In twenty years Mexico may well be moving these jobs further south as its own working class becomes service-ized. Right now, these countries have become the focus of capitalist plunder as their economies and cultures move rapidly toward the spectacular

phase of capital's development. Significantly, their populations wait with bated breath as the juggernaut pushes their levels of commodity consumption higher and higher. And yet, a significant number of anarchists still fantasize about organizing the working classes into syndicalist unions, still fantasize about proletarian revolution, and still fantasize about rationalizing capitalist production in ways which demand the same integration of workers into the commodity exchange nexus that capital has already been preparing.

The end of any substantial meaning to value under capital, an outcome Camatte has been predicting for decades, has been accomplished. Without any significant general equivalent, not gold, not paper, but simple value as expressed in the movement of thousands of bits of information—the flow of electrons to and fro around the globe, it's impossible for anyone to log who owns what, when, or where. To say that capital has broken free of the law of value is to misread the current situation. The only real question left is whether value exists at all, or whether it is simply numbers in a vast game of virtual monopoly? Is this vanishing of value reflected in a parallel trend towards a vanishing of critique? Where, is the insightful, brilliant and slashing discussion that lays bare this insanity once and for all. Where is the critique that can inspire authentic opposition from the operators of the global machine?

In this context how can anarchists become more effective? By accusing radical rivals of harboring fascist, racist or sexist sympathies? By inventing more complex theoretical systems, which only the originators can ever hope to master? By calling for a return to some sort of imagined anarcho-fundamentalism that only exists in the books of historians who never knew—nor could understand—the fertile creativity of anarchic movements? Or by searching out ever more disgusting terms of denunciation and abuse to use against those who disagree?

Or could it ever make just a little more sense to give people with other perspectives the benefit of the doubt for a change, to present our own ideas in honest contrast to others? Personal attack, rumor and innuendo all have their place, not, however, within our milieu and not among our comrades. There is a time for aggressive, unrelenting contestation within the limits of theoretical discussion. There are points upon which none of us will ever all agree. (We certainly don't want anyone to agree with everything we write or present in the pages of *Anarchy*.) But save the personal, scathing abuse for those who defend and apologize for the system we are seeking to destroy.

After the fall of Eurocommunism, with the continuing triumph of capital on a global scale, anarchists are the only oppositional milieu left standing. It's going to take serious investigation, criticism and creative modes of contestation to spark an effective, global response. Trash talk won't do it.

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